

The Stamps of Canada, Chapter XII

Based on a Mekeel's Weekly Publication by B. W. H. Poole, with images added

Chapter XII.—The 8¢ Stamp of 1893.

Until 1889 the registration fee had to be prepaid by means of the special stamps issued for the purpose. When, in 1889, a uniform registration fee of 5¢ was adopted the public were given permission to use the ordinary postage stamps in making up the difference between the old rate of 2¢ and the new one. This was done largely to enable the old 2¢ labels to be used up. In 1893 it was decided to discontinue the use of special registration stamps altogether and to permit the payment of the registry fee by means of the regular postage stamps. As the rate of domestic postage was 3¢ at that time and the registration fee was 5¢, a new stamp, by means of which both postage and registration could be paid together, it was decided, would be useful. Consequently an 8¢ denomination was issued, this being recorded in the *Philatelic Record* for October, 1893, though, judging from the following extract from the *Weekly* for August 10th, 1893, it would appear that the new value was in general circulation at least as early as August 1st:—

The following orders were posted up in all Canadian post-offices on August 1st:

A new postage stamp of the value of 8¢ is now being put into circulation. This stamp will be available for the prepayment either of registration fee and postage combined, or of postage only. The 5¢ registration stamp, when the present supply is exhausted, will be withdrawn.

The new denomination, as stated in the *Philatelic Record*, "resembles in design the 3 cents of the current series; but the head of the Queen has been turned the other way, and is now to the left."

This stamp was of similar size to the other values of the set then current (excepting the 20¢ and 50¢, of course) and it was printed from steel plates in sheets of 200 arranged in ten horizontal rows of twenty stamps each. According to Mr. Howes, there were no marginal imprints of any kind. This denomination was printed on wove paper and perforated 12 like the others. The variety with gauge of 11-1/2 × 12 is reported in connection with this value but, like the similar varieties of the earlier issues which we have already mentioned, the statement requires verification before it can be definitely accepted.

The 8¢ is known entirely imperforate in the blue-grey shade, which was one of the earliest if not the first shade for this stamp. The *Philatelic Record* calls it "slate-grey" but evidently the tint now generally classified as "blue-grey" was meant.

This stamp provides a large number of very distinct shade varieties. Just 13 months after it was first chronicled the *Philatelic Record* says:—"Whether by accident or intention does not appear to be quite clear, but copies of the present 8 cents are found in much darker color than we have hitherto seen. Messrs. A. Smith & Son have shown us copies that are slate-black of the darkest kind."

A writer in the *Canada Stamp Sheet* for October, 1900, says:—

There are three varieties of this stamp, the slate, the lilac-grey and the purple. The first and second tints are comparatively common, but the purple is not found in every dealer's stock nor has it a place in many stamp collections. In fact, it is a variety but little known to the average collector, from the fact that it is seldom offered, either



Left to right, violet black, blue gray, slate

on approval sheets or on the counter of the dealer. There ought to be no difficulty in distinguishing this stamp from its mates of the same denomination, for while the backs of the rest present a white surface, in this case the back or paper is of a decidedly purplish hue. In my opinion this stamp is a good one to pick up now, as its present value is far below its intrinsic worth.

Later still, a German paper referred to three main printings for this stamp a translation of the article appearing in *Gibbons Stamp Weekly* for June 13th, 1908, as follows:—The last stamp issued showing a portrait of the late Queen Victoria as a young girl was the 8 cents, Canada, issued in July, 1893. The stamp was intended for a combined postage and registration stamp; 3¢ for postage (inland) 5¢ registration fee.

There were three distinct printings of this stamp; they may be easily distinguished from each other by differences of shade.

July, 1893, blue-grey; October, 1895, slate-grey; ? 1897, purple-black. This extract, it will be noted, is very explicit as regards the actual number issued as well as the dates of issue of the three most distinctive shades. On what authority these statements are based we cannot say, but Mr. Howes shows from official records that many more than the quantity stated were printed, viz.:—

The first delivery of these stamps, and of course the first printing, was of 100,000, as recorded in the stamp accounts for 1893. As these accounts were made up to 30th June, and there is no record of any "issue to postmasters," the stamps were doubtless delivered just before the accounts were closed, so that opportunity had not been given to distribute the new value. For the next few fiscal years the amount received from the manufacturers averaged over a million and a half annually, so that by the time it was superseded it had been printed to the number of at least 7-1/2 millions. The total number issued of these stamps was 5,885,000, but unfortunately there are no records of the quantities of each of the three printings.

It will be noticed that there is no 8 cents in the King Edward VII issue, for the simple reason that the inland rate had been reduced to 2 cents; therefore the present combined postage and registration stamp is a 7 cents.

Reference List: 1893.

Engraved and Printed by the British American Bank Note Co. Ottawa. Wove Paper. Perf. 12.

8¢ grey, Scott's No. 48. 48a, 49 or 49a. [Scott no longer lists a 48 or 49 and this stamp is now Sc. 44 violet black, with 44a blue gray, 44b slate and 44c gray.]